



**FEMA**

**STRENGTHENING DISASTER RECOVERY FOR THE NATION**



# **Strengthening Disaster Recovery for the Nation**

## **VIDEO TELECONFERENCE (VTC)**

### **Region IX**

**Time:** November 9, 2009, Monday, 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM (Pacific)

**Participating Locations:** FEMA Region IX, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada, American Samoa, Guam, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia

**Participation Via:** VTCs, phone bridge (only) and participating through WebEx

**Sectors Represented:** Federal and State agencies, nonprofits and private sector and Tribal representation

**Note:** This product is provided as a general summary only, not a transcript of the discussion.

**Table of Contents**

Region IX VTC Summary ..... 2

## Region IX VTC Summary

Oakland, California

November 9, 2009

Region IX reordered the questioning sequence. They addressed questions in the following order through Group discussion: Q4, Q2, Q9, Q1, Q6, Q5, Q10, Q3, Q14, Q7 (reworded), Q13, Q11, Q8, Q15, Q16 (reworded). To begin the conversation, Facilitators asked for volunteers from different backgrounds to provide the first response. All questions except one (original Q12) were addressed.

### PARTICIPANT COMMENTS

**NOTE: Responses are by questions posed and are noted using the same sequencing as the VTC.**

#### Q4: How would you define a successful disaster recovery?

- Region IX participants defined success, in part, as **“coming back to pre-disaster conditions.”**
- Participants think the recovery process is **divided into phases** and there are important initiatives that are needed in to ensure success.

RECOVERY PHASES	KEY INITIATIVES
Short-term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Having “good” communications.</li><li>• Providing for those immediately in need.</li></ul>
Mid-term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Building partnerships with local, State and Federal authorities.</li><li>• Involving the private sector.</li><li>• Community participation.</li><li>• Temporary restoration.</li></ul>
Long-term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continuing negotiations.</li><li>• Rebuilding.</li><li>• Continued communication.</li><li>• Returning to a state of coordination among everybody.</li></ul>

- Participants think the following characteristics and attributes are part of what defines a successful recovery.
  - **Full community involvement** — not only from governmental infrastructure, but also from local community and private sectors.
  - **“Good” training** for locals and governmental partners.
  - **Active leadership** from all involved.
- And the following activities are needed to ensure success:
  - **Consequence management** incorporated into planning phases.
  - **Involved** community and State and Federal partners.
  - Assessments that **identify potential shortfalls** in the event of a disaster.

- Participants said success depends on the **timeframe** in which recovery happens. For example, reestablishing the local economy should occur over a short amount of time. Or, a small disaster can take two (2) years to close out. A larger disaster can take four (4) to five (5) years. Participants recommend using actual **timeline metrics** to measure success.
- One participant had a different perspective: **Successful recoveries require different elements**. Success needs to be defined for each; then look at recovery as whole. For example, recovery might involve:
  - Transportation infrastructure.
  - Communications.
  - Management structures.
  - Economy.
  - Public health/medical services.

Each will have its **own definition of success** and each will have **its own timeline**.

- Participants want local, county, State and Federal governments to come together with a **recovery strategy** at the beginning or early on in the disaster continuum. If the strategy is achieved then recovery is successful.
- One participant cautioned against locking into timelines if there are complicated disasters. Complicated disasters often involve environmental and historical (and other complex) issues. Disasters such as earthquakes can be very complicated. It is important to be quick and efficient, but it is important to also be careful about making arbitrary deadlines. **Timelines may vary depending on complexity and nature of event**.

## **Q2: Are there clear phases in the disaster recovery process that are useful milestones?**

While Region IX participants touched on identifying recovery phases when discussing Question 1, they continued when addressing Question 2. They noted a sequence of events that needs to occur:

- First, communities need to **assess what just happened**. For example: *What was the event? Did it happen suddenly?*
- Recovery leadership and governing authorities should already be **aware of available resources**.
- Restore **communications** first, **transportation** second and concentrate on **rescue of human life** in first few hours and days.
- Then do a comprehensive **assessment** of infrastructure and proceed from there.
- Participants advanced another phasing of recovery:

## RECOVERY PHASES: ANOTHER VIEW

PHASE 1	DISASTER RESPONSE ACTIVITIES	COMMENTS
<b>Declaration Phase</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Routinely requested by the governor.</li> <li>• Approved by the president.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expedite the process.</li> <li>• Process should be joint.</li> <li>• Relies on a joint preliminary damage assessment.</li> <li>• Determine the need for individual assistance.</li> </ul>
<b>Joint Field Office (JFO) Stands Up</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Debris management.</li> <li>• Shelter.</li> <li>• Housing.</li> </ul>	<u>3 Separate Staffing Needs</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual Assistance (IA) staffing.</li> <li>• Public Assistance (PA) staffing: Minimal until applicant briefings have been held.</li> <li>• <i>Hazard mitigation:</i> Prevent and minimize damage and similar events.</li> </ul>
<b>Transition to Recovery</b>		
<b>Long-term Recovery</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community-based.</li> <li>• Interfaces with State Emergency Management Agencies (EMAs).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begins while JFO is open.</li> <li>• Uses systems already in place and continuing throughout the JFO.</li> </ul>

- Another participant expanded upon the above listing the following as phases of recovery. Those additional to the ones shown on the chart are in red text below.
  - *Disaster Declaration.*
  - Establishment of JFO.
  - Establishment of robust external affairs/joint info center.
  - Opening of disaster recovery or assistance centers.
  - Establishment of IA/PA and mitigation.
- Participants said there may not be a clear distinction between phases. **It is not necessarily clear when response ends and recovery begins.**
- Participants identified several issues they feel merit consideration in recovery planning:
  - There are **social** and **economic** issues wrapped up with prioritization of resources.
  - Defining recovery phases **instills confidence** in the community and *from* the business sector. Participants noted that confidence is important because there needs to be enough confidence to reinvest in area.
  - The government needs to model establishing **priorities** and make sure priorities match scale of event. Participants used a specific region of one state as an example. Participants said there is an enormous gap that will negatively impact that specified region and economy, if we don't create a better model than we have today.

- Participants said, “*We **don’t have in place programs needed for reconstruction.***” **Loan documents** were noted as an example. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has programs and waivers, but local governments do not. After a *Declaration*, approval from Congress is required for money and loan programs. Participants said “hopefully” **pre-agreements** are already in place.
- **Permits** will be issued once reconstruction gets underway providing an opportunity to quantify recovery activity.
- Participants think **all issues are specifically related to housing**, which is a huge part of many disasters.
- Participants think existing PA/mitigation programs do not address huge issues in recovery following seismic events, noting the level of **insurance** is very low (estimated five percent), as an example.
  - This presents huge **housing challenges** beyond short-term shelter and raises lots of **policy** issues beyond reconstruction.
  - Participants expect housing to be in **the hands of banks** because, in their view, people will walk away, especially if they don’t have adequate insurance.
  - Participants also observed that a disaster-impacted area cannot recover under existing PA programs.
  - Recovery plans will need to be adopted by region and **procedures and audit functions will determine how funds are allocated.**
  - Participants feel a **strong governance** model needs to be created before disaster occurs. After a disaster there is too much political chaos.
- Two (2) milestones are
  - Establishing critical **infrastructure** (e.g., transportation for tourists to come and go as the community recovers from the disaster), and
  - **Full business functionality.**

### **Q9: How can Federal, State and local disaster planning and recovery processes and programs be best coordinated?**

Region IX VTC participants said:

- **Standardization.** Participants with field experience said, “When preliminary disaster assessment teams go out, when ‘we go into field’ and begin the ‘nitty-gritty’ of writing Project Worksheets (PWs) or meeting with individuals, the **rules seem to change.**” Standardization of “rules,” policies and procedures can facilitate the delivery of recovery assistance.
- **Pre-positioning.** Region IX participants think that pre-positioning those things likely needed in the wake of a disaster **prior to setting up long logistics chains** is “key” to expediting recovery. A commitment by FEMA to assist in trying to designate resources would be helpful.
- **Exercising.** Participants feel exercises help to foster planning efforts among levels of government – county, State and Federal. From tabletop drills to catastrophic planning initiatives to full-scale real-time simulations, participants feel exercising helps to **coordinate** response efforts.

- **Model programs.** VTC participants want to see recovery professionals and stakeholders work with HUD/FEMA to design **model programs** that are **ready to be taken off a shelf and used** immediately in a disaster. Participants want to see model programs address:
- Address **recovery policies/procedures**.
  - Include **environmental clearance procedures**.
  - Have **plans** and **multiparty legal agreements** in place.
  - Provide **loan documents** and access to **legal opinions**.

Participants want model programs done and **approved in advance** (similar to mutual aid compacts). They also want “a lot” of housing industry players as a part of model programs development. These programs need to be in place nationwide to be able to “go” right away.

- **Coordination.** Participants feel disaster coordination works well when the Federal government pays and helps everyone to be working with the **same procedures, forms** and **other tools**. Participants want to see:
  - A **national response management system** — similar to the national incident management system (NIMS) — adopted across the nation, with the flexibility to be tailored as necessary to specific events.
  - A **centralized process** that “funnels up” PW appeals to “move appeals along.”
  - A plan to address and provide solutions for **environmental impediments** that delay the distribution of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) recovery funds in order to expedite Federal dollars.
  - Clearly identified roles for the **corporate/private sector**. Noting that there are “definitional issues” between the corporate sector and public agencies who serve broader audiences and have broader perspectives, participants think it is helpful to clarify the roles of both in terms of recovery. For example, the private sector may consider a disaster in terms of **physical damage** – damages localized to a single building or a disaster that wipes out an entire data center. Much of disaster recovery in the private sector concentrates on building-only failure.
  - A **regional perspective** in addition to a community-based perspective. Participants think successful disaster recovery may take a regional perspective.
  - While not specifically a coordination step, participants noted that **returning to the primary site** or area of impact is a post-disaster recovery step.
- **Private sector partnerships.** Private sector participants said the private sector has a minimal understanding of what priorities should be after a disaster and don’t know the timelines for infrastructure recovery. Immediately post-disaster the private sector needs to consider infrastructure impacts and **identify priorities** for restoration. Federal agencies can help. Identified impacts and priorities should “drive” private sector activities.

## Q1: How would you measure progress and what specific metrics should be considered for a successful disaster recovery?

- Region IX participants identified four (4) benchmarks for evaluating recovery progress:
  - **Critical infrastructure** is operational.
  - **Services and supply** are operational.
  - Disaster **victims are returned** to communities.
  - Communities are **self-reliant again**.

Participants continued to discuss what **defined success**. One participant defined success as: **Residents, parks, businesses**, etc. — community has to have all of these things back up and running to be self-reliant (not just people back in their homes). Another elaborated saying recovery means that housing is back and recovered and people are back in **suitable housing**. The **healthcare system** is functional; **schools** are back in service, **shelters are closed** (people back in homes), **business community** is functional again – local businesses, but also **major manufacturing** and **industry** are functional again. Others added:

- Return of **water service, wastewater** services – both are needed “before you can do much more in terms of recovery.”
  - Specific business **sectors** important to region’s economy have been restored (noting that they are different per region) and the return of small businesses, “because that is where many jobs are.”
  - Critical **government services**, such as trash removal, and other issues have returned.
- Using post-Katrina as an example, participants noted that larger corporations have the ability to survive and flourish in pre-disaster conditions but **don’t necessarily return** to a disaster-impacted area. They said businesses have to have a reason to return to disaster-damaged areas for the **community to survive**.
  - Participants think having some kind of measurement of how the community was before the disaster is helpful to determining progress of recovery post-disaster. They expressed that **baseline** conditions are not currently well defined and are not tracked well long-term. “We don’t have a good handle on what markers/metrics are.” One participant suggested establishing “some kind of” baseline for “stability so infrastructure can be reasonably reconstructed and can reach close out.”

Participants think the following questions should be considered:

- *What kind of metrics can be developed to get a baseline?*
- *What kind of timelines can be set for restoring housing – what does this mean substantively?*

#### **Q6: What are the appropriate State, local and Tribal roles in leading disaster recovery efforts?**

- Participants said **local and Tribal when impacted, government has the lead and overall responsibility**. All other levels of government provide assistance and resources.
- NIMS calls for coordination with people not normally coordinated with. Participants think that is a key issue within the command structure that needs to be addressed. They suggested that there need to be efforts to get potential recovery partners to the “table” prior to a disaster. **Pre-disaster planning** and **coordination to identify resources** and **entities** is needed.
- It was noted that **Tribes have unique challenges** in coordinating disaster resources and aid.
  - As a **sovereign nation** they are independent of the State and can go directly to the president.
  - Reservation **land can be in more than one county or State**. This is a challenge when dealing with local agencies.



- Reservation populations are not always **large enough** to meet thresholds for funding (specifically a fire in one city). Participants suggest reducing the numbers required for Tribes in obtaining disaster assistance.
- One particular state has **non-recognized Tribes** and they have separate rights under State law. Those special circumstances need to be known and understood by recovery partners.
- Participants want recovery dollars to **flow directly to local governments** where local capacity exists. Where local governments are qualified to play key roles and large cities and counties have capacity to manage resources and manage the recovery, participants feel funding should come directly to them, bypassing the State.

#### Q5: What are best practices in managing recovery from disasters?

- Region IX participants identified the following:
  - Establishing and **implementing partnerships** with the private sector and nonprofits.
  - Pre-planning.
  - Developing and implementing **structured systems** such as Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS)/NIMS pre-disaster.
  - Ensuring **qualified staffing**:
    - Recovery **credentialing** for positions in the operations center and/or JFO.
    - Identification of **capabilities** of those performing duties in operations centers.
  - Continuously improving practices by identifying and institutionalizing **Lessons Learned**.
- Participants also identified **characteristics** and **attributes** of successful recoveries:
  - **Speed**: Getting resources to needs quickly.
  - Good **record keeping**.
  - Strong **communication** between agencies and with the public and private sector.
  - Constant **restatement** of recovery goals to ensure mission focus.
  - Local **accountability**.
  - **Transparency** in decision making.
  - **Flexibility**.
  - Willingness to **learn** and make changes as needed.
- Participants also noted that it is critical for regions and cities going through disaster recovery to have **people (staff) in agencies that “will push things along.”** For example, one particular city has an ongoing City Council committee, which provides access and ongoing information so the public is informed.
- Participants observed that disaster response and recovery may be new to departments and agencies not previously involved or having reasons to work together. Ensuring that every department understands recovery issues — not just emergency responders, is important. A best practice example given was the **one-stop permitting process** in place (after one city’s fire).
- Coordination with the **insurance and business communities** ahead of time will facilitate payments and funding streams so they occur as quickly and seamlessly as possible.

- Participants noted that with a **plan in place quickly**, citizens don't believe progress is occurring. Further, absent a plan, participants feel "politics" become immersed, delaying recovery.
- One particular city/county shared a new citywide-focused initiative that has to benchmark against everyone else. It identifies three (3) attributes that are key, effective and set the framework for the communications process:
  - **Emergency resources.**
  - Private sector **resilience** and recovery workgroup.
  - **Lifelines** network: Transportation, communications and utilities.

The initiative calls for ongoing meetings.

- Participants also shared a best practices suggestion for IA and PA: Understanding that IA and PA are separate, participants want to see IA and PA **work "in coordination"** with one another and a forum created to ensure (at least) weekly communication.

#### **Q10: As disaster recovery is primarily a State and local leadership issue, what are best practices for the timing (including start and end) and form of Federal assistance and coordination?**

- Participants suggested:
  - **Planning to start before disasters** and want planning to involve counties, State and Federal agencies. They expressed that constant planning and collaboration prior to a disaster are needed.
  - **Constant communication** and working together among and between recovery partners.
  - Implementation of **EMAC** (Emergency Management Assistance Compact) resources, Federal assistance and inter- and intra-state assistance.
  - Look at **what can be improved** upon prior to and after disasters.
  - Direct involvement with State and Federal partners from **onset of the disaster**.
  - **Recovery starts immediately**. So State and Federal partners need to be "in the room" when talking through how to design recovery.
  - **Planning** "a lot" in advance.
  - **Insurance** is a key recovery issue. For example, almost no one has earthquake insurance. Insurance has to be available. Participants questioned whether having an adequate amount of insurance should be required. They also expressed that Federal leadership needs to "weigh in" on this issue, perhaps study it and provide guidance.
  - **Standardized building codes**, pre-mitigation. Participants suggested there is a Federal role in developing and implementing standardization.
  - **Start as soon as possible**. Establish timeframes that are realistic but quick.
  - **Speed up permitting processes** (for such regulations as the *National Environmental Policy Act* and the *Clean Water Act*) by assigning extra Federal agency officials to process permit applications for recovery work.
- Participants also discussed issues in **conflicting disaster revenue streams**. When cities and counties receive Federal money, there can be a conflict between HUD money, FEMA money and other money that might come into an area. Participants would like to see:

- Federal agencies get together and determine what the **requirements for various funds, identify overlaps and conflicts and minimize duplicative “keeping track”** of money at the local level.
- Coordination so there is **one (1) system for disaster recovery**.
- They noted that **staffing changes** result in coordination as a constantly evolving process.
  - Ongoing, different ways of partnering — not just providing the money.

### Q3: What features of the Federal disaster recovery assistance are most important to you?

- Participants identified as *existing* features important to them:
  - Federal disaster assistance as a **quick way to have response** from the Federal and local levels as well to the necessary resources — not only from FEMA-sponsored programs but also from other Federal and State agencies. And Tribal representations are included.
  - Getting people on the **financial side** of the house together — Federal government as well as State and local governments should spend time on training.
  - **Mitigation** as a very important long-term benefit of the Federal program, *Stafford Act* money that becomes available for mitigation projects when a disaster is declared and planning to minimize impact of future disasters.
  - **Speed** in getting resources on the ground.
- New features participants want to see:
  - **More pre-disaster mitigation resources.** Participants feel pre-disaster mitigation is important — some even called it critical — and needs greater levels of funding. They noted one city’s pilot project to strengthen second soft apartment buildings as an example of a project that needs funding support.
  - A program and/or incentive for schools and buildings to **strengthen structures** –resulting in significantly less damage when facing future disasters.
  - An initiative that looks at the possible hazards associated with the large number of existing **unreinforced masonry** buildings.
  - Appropriate recovery processes in place and a **greater understanding** of those processes so local authorities know:
    - How to handle the money flow.
    - Who is making decisions and who is in charge (the governance piece).
  - Incentives for **retrofitting** buildings. Participants feel incentives will make a “huge” difference in terms of speed and timing of recovery. They suggested an incentive of \$5k/unit would result in apartment owners retrofitting buildings.
  - **Waivers** for Tribes to avoid the 25 percent match required in implementing Project Worksheets (PWs) to make recovery more accessible. Tribal authorities find challenges with meeting the match required and don’t have the ability to disperse a breakdown of the 25 percent the way States do.
  - Greater effort to work within the **constitutionally determined structures of Tribal nations**. Participants noted as an example of what is typically viewed as IA by FEMA is not viewed as IA by Tribal governments.
  - A **“no liability”** issue on identifying soft-story buildings.

- Participants noted that **private water utilities** don't have access to Federal disaster recovery assistance funds, so they are self-sufficient in taking care of their own incidents and emergencies.
- At the end of the day, participants said it comes back to **planning, resources** and **integration** of all of the partners meeting and finding out what is available so recovery can go forward.

#### Q14: What are best practices for integrating economic and environmental sustainability into recovery?

- Participants want to see the JFO be a **more comprehensive** facility with significant business and environmental sector representation recovery initiated. They feel it is important for different industries to be part of the governance and institutional linkage structure, as well as linked into JFO or other response structures. Participants noted as a best practice the incorporation of the Department of Environmental Affairs into recovery and response planning and decision making, and new EOC s with a room dedicated to the private sector.
- There is a need for a **short-term financing structure** that enables rebuilding of infrastructure on an accelerated basis. Grant programs are often on a reimbursement basis further challenging already challenged cash-strapped local authorities.
- Participants think **recovery exercises** are important and adequate funding is needed at State and Federal levels to support them.
- Environmental **sustainability** and environmental **impacts** are important recovery issues, needing prior planning and guidance. They suggested:
  - **Plan ahead** (pre-disaster) for a quick economic recovery and for minimizing environmental disturbance during the recovery efforts. They noted that the Department of Environment (in one certain city) is working on planning now. They are putting environmental concerns into objectives of plans.
  - Using **debris removal** as an example:
    - Plan on moving it to its **final destination** at the beginning; not having to move it more than once.
    - Assess locations for the **appropriateness** of debris and identify them using mapping technology.
    - **Pre-plan** to address debris management issues: Look at the role of land use, transportation, transit, greenhouse gases, etc.
    - Develop **debris management plans** at the State level.
  - Recognize that **floods and fires are parts of many natural ecosystem** processes.
  - Promote mitigation as a “**green**” practice: Mitigate now. Avoid tear down and rebuilding.

#### Q7: How can the recovery process better include nonprofit and private sector partners?

*(Original wording: How can the nonprofit and private sectors be better integrated into recovery?)*

- Participants had a lot of ideas to involve the private sector in recovery:
  - Include private sector in the **development** and **implementation** of recovery policies, procedures, training and exercises.
  - Develop a **registry** of private sector partners, including capabilities and resources.
  - **Embed** private sector participation into emergency response and JFOs.
  - Establish **business** and **utilities operation centers** as a direct link to recovery decision-making.
  - Establish **groups** and **committees**, such as statewide planning committees. They can be effective systems for donations management, which could include the private sector and Private Nonprofits (PNPs).
  - Have **recovery plans in place**. For example, have structural engineers approved ahead of time by local building officials so that they can reinspect buildings that were initially tagged as red, yellow, (or green) immediately after an event. This will help businesses get back to work as quickly as possible.
  - **Heighten the profile of continuity of operations planning (COOP)**. From the corporate sector make sure employees can get to work. One city shared that it has made great progress on this issue by:
    - Hiring a **business liaison**.
    - **Finding partners** who are groups of groups like restaurant associations, chambers of commerce and others.

The first test was their initial H1N1 response that resulted in an 11,000-person conference call. Participants were invited on the call by sending an initial e-mail to groups of group partners.

- Other **BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES** noted by participants included:
  - American Red Cross. They have a mechanism for governments (State, local and county) to **better understand the mission** and **mandates** of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to allow for more effective emergency management process.
  - One state's Utilities Emergency Association (UEA) — (working with that state's Emergency Management Agency (EMA)) is facilitating public and private utilities engagement in **response involvement** and in restoration activities and events.
  - Mitigate **indemnifications**, or hold-harmless clauses for donations or voluntary services (which can be hold-ups in the process).
  - Include the private sector and nonprofits in **exercises** and **training**.
  - At the community level there may be some benefit to **identifying neighborhood hubs** (where people can get basic food, water and hardware). The hub concept helps small businesses and the community at large for priority restoration. Added benefits include less pressure on shelters and economic resiliency faster.

### **Q13: What unmet needs are common to most disasters that do not seem adequately addressed under the current systems and programs?**

- **Populations whose first language is not English.** With foreign language and cultural barriers, people do not want to come forward to ask for help. Some are afraid of government help. A lot of outreach is needed; a lot of outreach is done. Suggestions offered include:
  - Local authorities are working with FEMA and **outreach people** to identify foreign language speakers. Participants feel it is important to recognize this issue and make the

effort to reach these communities (recognizing it might not be as big an issue for other states).

- Work through nonprofit organizations that are **trusted members** of those communities.
- **After-disaster analysis reports.** Better efforts need to be made to report on the extent of damage, effects and effectiveness of response, recovery and mitigation efforts. Participants feel it would be wise for the Federal government to **routinely fund the writing of reports** on the Lessons Learned from all major disasters. If properly used, these reports can help inform the public and decision makers.
- **Federal 324 management processes.** Are “very” burdensome to some states, causing “great” hardship and is a drain on State resources, as well as local and Tribal and can be detrimental to the recovery process.
- **Consistent staffing.** Participants said:
  - It would be “nice” to have **consistency** in FEMA staff assignments throughout the recovery process as liaisons throughout the process.
  - A full-time **liaison** is key in any disaster.
- **Outreach.** Participants feel outreach between organizations and recovery partners occurring prior to disaster, will help mitigate effects of the disaster.
- **Special-needs populations.** Those who need help need to be **identified**. Strategies and resources are needed to assist them. The fundamental questions of: *Who will need help? How will they be helped?* need to be considered. Participants said this is a “huge” issue that needs work and should be part of pre-planning.
- **Mental health support.** Participants noted the need for **mental health** support in a disaster environment is a “huge” need on the IA side.
- **Uninsured and underinsured:**
  - Unmet needs are **prevalent**.
  - HOA (Home Owner Associations) situations: There are **earthquake insurance** issues for multifamily structures and when houses are joined.
- **From IA perspective:**
  - Basic sequence of delivery – boiling down to long-term recovery committees.
  - **Expectations** need to be managed with clear understandings of what the government programs can (and cannot) provide.
  - **Permitting and rebuilding fees:** People often don’t have resources unless they get a Small Business Administration (SBA) loan or have insurance.
  - Ongoing problems of the **financial burden of mortgage payment** as well as **rebuilding expenses**. Participants suggested bringing in the banking industry to explore ways to provide additional help.
- **Utility critical interdependencies.** One key element may include utility critical infrastructure and their interdependencies even between utilities. For example, a water utility has a key need

for electric power for water supplies. Other utilities, such as telecommunications, include electric and often include water, which is often used to cool infrastructure. One particular state's Utilities Emergency Association (UEA) is working on the critical interdependencies with that state's emergency management agency (EMA).

### **Q11: What are the greatest capacity challenges that local and State governments face in disaster recovery and what are the best practices for increasing that capacity?**

#### **CAPACITY CHALLENGES**

- **Personnel.** Lack of emergency management personnel **dedicated** to responding to a disaster.
- **Mitigation plan.** Because of requirements of grant funding, this is a major issue. Establishment of **full-time, trained recovery mitigation staff** is the greatest capacity challenge.
- **Private property retrieval.** With a Regional Catastrophic Preparedness (RCP) grant, want to do inventory of sites for short-term housing in five- (5-) county region. Capacity issue in dealing with **private property retrieval**. After a disaster in one particular area, people couldn't get their possessions.
- **Professional services.** We do not necessarily have enough **structural engineers** to inspect all the buildings that may be damaged from a major earthquake, and then design appropriate recovery (e.g., retrofitting) measures.
- **Post-disaster cash flow.** Access to **financial instruments** is essential to meeting this challenge. One participant said the controller's office is taking the lead on figuring out cash flow issues.
- **Adequate capital improvement capacity.** One statewide group said they have a lot of maintenance equipment scattered all over the State but very little capacity to rebuild a freeway from scratch if necessary. A lot of plans assume rebuilding can begin within a week or so — which is not necessarily the case.
- **25 percent match.** Debris removal, highway repairs require 25 percent match. **Need sufficient moneys** in disaster funds to pay the match, EMAC reimbursement. For small states, disaster funding is a big issue, especially in present economic times.
- **Supplies.** Even with broad range of businesses, most businesses only keep supplies on hand for a **just-in-time** purpose. Working on developing a mega-contract, to rely on companies from outside the area to bring in resources. We do not have a firm logistics plan to get resources in, staged and moved around when needed.
  - Potential to set up private sector **resource registry** at State or Federal level. Resource registries – enable businesses to pre-identify resources, volunteers, etc., that they would be willing to donate during a disaster.
  - Private sector **liaison** is critically important – can help in solving resource gaps.
- **Staffing.** Critical to continue **mutual aid** for staffing and to staff up building departments quickly.
  - From the EMA perspective, participants said they are challenged with **decreasing numbers of staff** at the local and State levels. The ability to bring in resources from other states helps address this issue but relies on collaborative working relationship state-to-state. To be successful, entities have to work together pre-event or during exercises and establish relationships to support capacity building at the State level when needed.
  - Participants would like FEMA to help **sponsor** special Region 9 state-to-state collaboration to help increase capacity and to help respond better.



- **COOP.** Needs to be enforced for county, local and State agencies. Private sector partners and especially banks have a COOP plan in place. COOP is lower priority for smaller businesses.
- **Employee disaster planning.** One participant suggested that **key employees** stay with their families in the company HQ when there is a shortage of shelters. This is a good practice to pass on.
  - One participant noted that investor-owned **utilities are "local government"** and will likely be overwhelmed conducting damage assessments. They may need mutual aid and assistance from other utilities, just to assess and prioritize infrastructure challenges.

## Q8: What are best practices for community recovery planning that incorporates public input?

Region IX participants gave best practices examples and also identified tools for effective outreach and solicit public input.

### BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES

- One county developed a **committee** to help prioritize community issues.
- After a disaster in one specific region, another community's leaders and key businesses **teamed up** to facilitate restoration of the local economy.
- Developed a **care group** that involved public outreach.
- Another city has an entire section focused on community engagement and person dedicated to the community engagement effort by:
  - Working through **groups of groups**.
  - Inherent response structure to engage groups.

They are just launching first two (2) **neighborhood resiliency initiatives** in the next few weeks and will report back on how these programs go. They are focusing on finding groups already gathered together to engage the groups and individual participants in conversations. Good way to do person-to-person engagement.

### OUTREACH TOOLS

- **Grassroots** and **town hall** approaches, seeking as much participation as possible.
- **Applicant briefings** and **kick-off meetings** are tools for soliciting and receiving public input.
- Frequent exercises that include community participation, with follow-up to revise response and recovery plans.
- **Sharing** of emergency response plans with water communities and counties that are served.
- Include community personnel and local first responders in water utility **exercises**.
- Where possible, **pre-work** strategy. ID relevant stakeholders and determine best communication channels and message points for the audiences.
- While not an outreach strategy, participants also recommended including disaster preparedness elements in **General Plans** noting that:
  - Sometimes communities don't want to build the **same way** after a disaster. Jurisdictions might start to look at this in planning stages.
  - Include discussions about **special-needs populations** and how they will be served.



## Q15: What are best practices for integrating mitigation and resilience into recovery?

Participants identified the critical action steps, opportunities, best practice examples and challenges in mitigation and resilience integration into recovery:

### ACTION STEPS

- **Define** the term “resiliency:” *What are the expectations of a purely resilient community? How broad or focused will some of those efforts be?*
- Identify **list** of activities for all hazard types.
- **Train** all local governments on best practices.
- **Streamline** environmental requirement and review processes.
- Ensure the **availability** of SMART teams to identify successful mitigation post-disaster.
- Ensure stakeholders **understand** critical utility infrastructure interdependencies and how and when restoration of electric power, telecommunications, gas, water and wastewater may be restored in a disaster.
- Local governments **adopt** repair and reconstruction ordinances.
- **Community service buildings** are also essential for recovery — definitely after a few weeks during recovery process.

### OPPORTUNITIES

- Emphasize or require a **406 hazard mitigation proposal** on every permanent work PW (and if not included, justification must be provided).
- Working with local elected officials, **integrate recovery** and mitigation by having a separate recovery planning initiative.
- Look at different **areas (sectors)** and consider how to integrate them in response planning. (Examples include: utilities, freight, agriculture and others.)
- Encourage people to **cross disciplines** in terms of codes and pay attention to all hazards.

### BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES

- Making Federal assistance available before (as in the *Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program*) and after a disaster (as in the *Stafford Act*) when people are **well focused on natural hazard issues**.
- One particular city – also has a **community group** that works with the Department of Building Inspection and looks at mitigation. The Mayor is working on soft-story legislation. We are looking at bond measures to go on ballot for seismic safety, including soft story.
- Participants thought that **this event** was an example of a best practice. Having a recovery initiative launched has been a good project to look at different areas and pull people together.

### CHALLENGES

- Local governments do not have the **staff** to think about recovery separate from mitigation or response.
- **Corporate private sector planning.** Participants noted that resilience is a new term for “hardening.” Risk are reduced with these efforts, but disaster may prevent occupation and functionality of building. Even with the best resilience efforts recovery planning is still needed. The most critical issue that the corporate sector faces is the absence of knowledge in terms of **planning parameters** and expectations about the **behavior** of fundamental

infrastructure elements. Government agency – should encourage/mandate transparency in terms of duration and regional impact.

**Q16: Anything else that we haven't covered?**

*(Original wording: What else would you like us to know?)*

- **National recovery system**, involving volunteers, all important.
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